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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 004444

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IT](#) [EUN](#)

SUBJECT: ITALIAN VIEWS ON NOVEMBER 22 GAERC

REF: A) STATE 244333 B) ROME 4404 C) ROME 4375 D)
ROME 4431

Classified By: LAB/HR COUNSELOR CANDACE PUTNAM. REASON:1.4 (B)(D).

MEPP

1. (C) EU CFSP Director Luigi Mattiolo said that ministers would have an extended discussion of Middle East issues over lunch on November 22, including a wide-ranging exchange of views on how the EU should enhance its role in the Quartet post-Arafat. Italy's views on the content of the Council statement are in line with those outlined ref a. Mattiolo emphasized that his government would be looking to Israel to capitalize on the opportunity represented by the change in Palestinian leadership. The Quartet must send clear, balanced signals to the region, including a call for the new Palestinian leadership to renounce terrorism and for all parties to follow the Roadmap. See ref b for further detail on Italy's views on the MEPP. Mattiolo added that donations to the Private Enterprise Partnership will be discussed in detail at the Euro-Med Conference on November 29. Italy will support a "generous" EU donation.

Turkey

2. (SBU) Mattiolo noted that Turkey is not on the agenda. See ref c for details on Italian thinking on the Turkish accession issue.

ESDP

3. (C) Italy is very pleased with progress thus far on the SFOR-EU/Althea handover. Defense Ministers will meet separately over lunch to discuss next steps and preparations for the December 2 ceremony in Sarajevo. Looking forward, Italy will continue to underline the importance of Berlin plus arrangements, particularly as they relate to Battlegroups and the NRF, since Italy will participate actively in both.

China Arms

4. (C) Mattiolo reiterated his view that there was no chance that the embargo would be lifted prior to the EU-China Summit on December 8. The Council and Summit statements would likely indicate that discussions would continue during the Luxembourg presidency, without an definite end date for lifting the embargo. Italy will also support references to the need for Beijing to accelerate progress on human rights as a condition for any consideration of lifting the embargo.

Belarus

5. (C) Italy shares US concerns over the flawed October 17 elections and the general human rights situation in general in Belarus. The draft Council statement is "almost completed and agreed," and sends a strong message to the regime in Minsk to conform with international standards on human rights. Member states were therefore inclined to remove discussion of Belarus from the agenda, however, Poland has requested that ministers discuss Belarus so that the EU can note the importance of reaching out to civil society groups and NGOs, in line with ref a points.

Cyprus

6. (SBU) Mattiolo said that discussion of Cyprus was dropped from the agenda. See ref d for Italy's views on increasing Voluntary Contributions.

SEMBLER

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